

# How to grow: CABBAGE

"A versatile and hardy crop that's great for growing in any outdoor setting, and harvested all year round. Cabbage is perfect for soups, stir-fries and salads"

## Essential Kit:

- 12 Cell Seed Pack
- Gravel Tray
- Pro Grower Veg & Brassica
- Dried Blood Fertiliser
- Butterfly Netting



## GENERAL GROWING TIPS

Cabbages really are the gardener's friend. This is one of the few crops that can be successfully grown for a year round harvest. This is a real boon during those lean winter months when very little is growing. This versatility puts them in the top three most popular homegrown vegetables in the UK. These versatile leafy greens come in variety of colours and textures such as red, white, savoy and kale.

With little fuss or bother cabbages will grow quite happily once planted out and they will be ready in around 20 weeks. As with many crops, sowing smaller batches of seeds with a couple of weeks in between each sowing is ideal for extending the harvest season.

## SOWING IN CELL PACKS & IN THE GROUND

Make sure that the seed you are sowing is suitable for when you are sowing it as different varieties grow at different times of the year. Sow one seed per cell in a 12 cell pack about 2cm deep. Water as required and leave in a warm greenhouse or even a sunny windowsill to germinate. After 4 or 5 weeks, thin the seedlings out to leave the strongest plants ready for planting out.

When sowing direct sow in a straight line leaving a gap of between 30-50cm spacing depending on the size of the variety you have chosen. Plant subsequent rows 30cm apart.

## PREPARING THE BED

Brassicas prefer a firm bed rich with well rotted organic matter and ideally in a sunny spot with at least 6 hours of direct sunshine a day. Because cabbages are all leaf the key to success is making sure they have enough nitrogen in the soil to enable photosynthesis to build strong cell walls to make a healthy plant. Choosing the right fertiliser for the initial and ongoing feeding is really important.

Cabbages thrive in slightly acid soils, and a Vegetable and Brassica fertiliser which has added calcium oxide (CaO) and boron (B) can help to reduce the pH to around 6.0 – 6.5 which is a perfect level for them. Apply this at a rate of 80-135gsm, dependent upon where you are in

the season, to give a quick nutrition boost.

An organic option would be to choose dried blood (NPK 12-0-0) which is rich in nitrogen. Over time, all organic fertilisers will also help improve soil structure and create a healthy media for growing all crops. Apply this at a rate of 35gsm and repeat every 3-4 weeks from early spring.

## PLANTING OUT

When your seedlings are ready to plant out firm down the soil in the bed where they will grow then rake over the surface before planting out to the recommended spacing on the seed packet. It is also worthwhile taking the additional precaution of adding a cabbage collar to prevent damage from the cabbage root fly. Where cabbages are direct sown into the bed you can add cabbage collars after the seedlings have grown their second set of leaves.

## COMMON PESTS

The cabbage root fly lays its eggs in the gap around the base of the plant. When using a collar on the plant the eggs are laid on the collar where they will dry out and die preventing the infestation. Infected crops will start to wither or show stunted growth. The collars will also help prevent damage from slugs and snails due to the copper added during manufacture. Cabbages are a thirsty plant so give them a good soak to help them settle. Make sure they are watered regularly but remember don't like to have their roots sat in water so a well-drained bed is important to maximise your yield. Butterflies can be a huge problem when growing cabbages. If you check the underside of the leaves, you will see small clusters of yellow eggs laid by the butterfly. Left alone they will hatch in a couple of weeks and the caterpillars will strip the leaves very quickly. To prevent this check regularly and remove the eggs by either wiping them away or crushing them with your finger.

Simply pick off any caterpillars that you find by hand and leave them somewhere for the birds to feed on. Alternatively a natural organic insecticide, such as Pyrethrum 5 EC is a great way to help control pests.

In some areas, pigeons can prove very destructive, stripping cabbages to their stalks in next to no time. The most effective way to stop butterflies and pigeons is to use a butterfly netting to cover the crop. Whilst netting does take a little more effort, it really is the most effective way to protect the bed.

## HARVESTING

Cabbaged mature within 18 - 24 weeks after planting depending on when in the year they are planted. There is no exact time to harvest the cabbage, simply cut them when they reach the size you need. If you don't need the space for your next crop then leaving the stalks may be beneficial.

## ANYONE FOR SECONDS?

To get a second, albeit much smaller head of cabbage, make sure you leave a stem around 8-10cm long. With a sharp knife cut a cross into the top of the stem about 1.5cm deep. The new cabbages (you may get up to six) start to appear around a week after cutting the first one.

## Need to know:



### SOW:

February to August



### PLANT:

April to October



### HARVEST:

All year round



### SPACING:

30cm-50cm



### LOCATION:

Plant in full sun